

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
FULL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
April 26, 2006, 4:30 p.m. Council Chambers

PRESENT

Ian Kohen
Greg Lewis
Jay Myers
John Roberts
Wes Roy
Jason Staley

ABSENT

Tony McClendon
Akua Ofori-Boateng
Gil Palmer
Marie Schroeder
John Stroh

***** Meeting Called to Order *****

STAFF PRESENT:

Director Arlette Tinsley, Deputy Director Lorraine Smith and Secretary Lula Young.

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

Secretary Roberts called roll. **Commissioner Lewis moved to accept the March minutes as submitted, Commissioner Roberts seconded. Motion carried.**

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Commissioner Lewis submitted a correction to the February 2006 Treasurer's report. The February beginning balance was \$6,099.02 instead of the reported amount of \$6,199.02. The error was due to a typographical error. The February ending balance of \$6,009.02 was correctly reported.

2006, was \$5,899.02. Transactions for the month included a disbursement of \$316.18, to BCSC Transportation for travel expenses to the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute Middle School Youth Summit and a deposit of \$220.00 generated by annual dinner ticket sales leaving a balance of \$5,802.84 as of April 26, 2006.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT:

No report due to illness.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Director Tinsley reported an attempted mediation during the month. Commissioner Staley was vigilant in an unsuccessful mediation attempt. The respondent could not agree on training; therefore, the case will go back into investigation.

Director Tinsley informed Commissioners that Deputy Director Smith has been involved in enforcing mediation on a different respondent which included making sure they have the resources for the training. Deputy Director Smith and new Commissioner McClendon visited Richard's school for Career Day and talked about Human Rights enforcement and the skills that are necessary to enforce civil rights law. Deputy Director Smith prepared a display and Commissioner McClendon talked about what motivated him to apply to become a Commissioner. A one-page questionnaire entitled 'Is It Discriminatory or Is It Not', with various scenarios was enjoyed by the students.

Director Tinsley also advised Commissioners of an ongoing settlement discussion that she participated in along with Chairperson Palmer and Deputy Director Smith. The Director advised she also attended a Continuing Legal Education offered by the Indiana Civil Rights Commission, during which she met Judge Scott, the new director of the Commission and Christine Cde Baca, the first assistant director for the Commission that is not an attorney. Director Tinsley updated Commissioners on the multiple presentations she facilitated, including the Mayor's Assistants Conference at the Indiana Convention for Cities and Towns. Chairperson Palmer attended the Police Audit and Review Committee. Both the Director and Deputy Director attended ongoing meetings of the Anti-Bullying taskforce with the school corporation and the Taylorsville Safety Committee.

Director Tinsley updated Commissioners of the ongoing issues within the immigrant community involving rumors that had a significant impact within the local community. Laura Hurt has created a new Immigrant Issues Committee in an attempt to deal with the rumors.

Director Tinsley discussed upcoming opportunities for Commissioners, such as the annual conference for the Indiana Consortium of State and Local Human Rights Agencies. Commissioner Staley advised that he had attended this conference last year and found it valuable. On April 28th, at the Center for Teaching and Learning there is a free anti-bullying training facilitated by Gina Woodward, an Olweus certified trainer. Director Tinsley also shared a list of activities planned by the Immigrant Issues Group for Monday, May 1, 2006, recognized as International Worker Rights Rights/Labor Day. The activities are planned as an attempt to turn the day into a positive event locally. Director Tinsley advised the Commission of the Immigrant Issues Group's request for volunteers and funding of the activities. The Mayor's office is supporting the event by providing a free movie in the afternoon. The budget submitted to the Commission includes the cost of supplies for a free car wash, which will be a gift to the community from local Latino youth, and to sponsor the 7pm, 'Day of Recognition' at The Commons. Commissioner Lewis volunteered for the soccer event. Commissioner Roberts volunteered for the movie. Commissioners Kohen and Roy volunteered for the 7pm event.

Commissioner Staley moved to approve Commission funding of \$275 to provide car wash supplies and sponsorship of the 7pm program for the Day of Recognition. Commissioner Roy seconded. Motion carried.

Regarding Commission support of the event, Director Tinsley informed Commissioners of State Board of Accounts regulations, that receipts must be submitted for reimbursement; a check is not automatically issued with the approval of the Commission alone.

WILLIAM R. LAWS AWARD:

Commissioners Staley, Kohen and Lewis served as the 2006 Laws Award Nominating Committee.

Commissioner Staley advised Commissioners that Gene Maresca is the committee's recommendation as the recipient of the 2006 Laws Award. Commissioner Staley shared some history on Mr. Maresca showing that he has been involved in the community for a long time. Mr. Maresca was on the Board of Directors with Eastside Community Center and arranged for the center to host its first Kwanzaa celebration and its first Hispanic function. Mr. Maresca is a past member of the Executive Board of the N.A.A.C.P. He was a founding member of Su Casa, and currently is the President of the Gay/Straight Alliance.

Director Tinsley and Vice-Chairperson Myers provided an overview of the process: the sub-committee makes a recommendation; the Commission can accept or reject the recommendation by motion or vote in favor of another nominee. The history of the formation of the sub-committee and the responsibility of researching all nominations was also shared.

Commissioner Staley moved to award the 2006 Laws Award to Mr. Gene Maresca. Commissioner Roberts seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Staley recommended Commissioner Lewis be selected as the chairperson of the 2007 Laws Award nominating committee. Vice chairperson Myers appointed Commissioner Greg Lewis as the chairperson of the 2007 Laws Award sub-committee.

OPEN FORUM/CURRENT EVENTS & COMMUNITY CONCERNS:

Vice Chairperson Myers invited visitors to introduce themselves and address any issues of concerns or ask questions of the Commission.

Visitors that introduced themselves were Mike Wilson and Carla Barrett. No issues or questions were presented to the Commission. Commissioner Kohen later announced the arrival of another visitor identified as Gene Maresca by Director Tinsley.

Commissioner Lewis reported on his participation in The Holocaust Memorial Observance at the State Capitol. The speaker was a holocaust survivor. Other participants included Israeli exchange students that are currently attending North Central high school. Director Tinsley shared information on holocaust resources maintained in the Commission library.

Director Tinsley informed Commissioners of a request for volunteers from the Northside Titans. Students need to interview volunteers on the following topics: Assisted Suicide, AIDS, Eleanor Roosevelt, Rosa Parks, Child Abuse, and The Salem Witch Trials. Commissioners provided resource and contact information.

Commissioner Lewis announced that a major feature article would be released in the East High School newspaper, The Oracle and discussed its contents. Discussion ensued.

LIAISON UPDATES – GAY/STRAIGHT ALLIANCE:

Commissioner Kohen advised Commissioners of a request by the G/SA to have the Commission review an ordinance that was recently passed in Indianapolis and attempt to

locate a city council member that would be willing to support a similar ordinance for Columbus. Additional discussion ensued over previous research completed six years ago and a policy resolution that was passed by the Commission in 2001 after a yearlong study. Commissioners continued discussion surrounding enforceability, results in other communities after their ordinance changes and obtaining a legal opinion. Vice chairperson Myers advised he would like to set up a study group (officially a sub-committee) consisting of Commissioners Kohen, Roberts and Stroh and a member of the G/SA, to provide a recommendation to the Commission on whether the Commission should pursue an ordinance change after three months of research. Director Tinsley provided clarification of the sub-committee structure, in accordance with the rules and regulations - only the Commissioners are voting members. Vice Chairperson Myers also requested a legal brief from the Columbus City attorney on the enforceability of such an ordinance.

LIAISON UPDATES – CULTURAL AWARENESS COMMITTEE:

Commissioner Roy advised that Cultural Awareness Committee had met the previous week but due to the lack of a quorum, there was only general discussion considering the next activity.

OTHER BUSINESS – INTERFAITH FORUM LIAISON:

Vice Chairperson Myers informed Commissioners of discussions he has had with past Commissioner, Cindy Felsten and her interest in being appointed as the Commission's liaison to the Interfaith Forum.

Commissioner Roberts moved to appoint Cindy Felsten as the liaison to the Interfaith Forum. Commissioner Staley seconded. Motion carried.

ANNUAL DINNER/ESSAY CONTEST:

Director Tinsley encouraged Commissioners to sell tickets and reserve or purchase their own. Vice-Chairperson Myers advised the high school art winner would now be attending the dinner.

Director Tinsley and Deputy Director Smith reviewed current assignments and tasks for the annual dinner. Commissioner Lewis volunteered to aid John McCauley. Hosts for the contest winners were: Commissioner Roberts, middle school essay winner; Commissioner Lewis, high school essay winner; Commissioner Myers, high school art winner; elementary essay, art, and middle school art winners will be hosted by new Commissioners. Commissioners Roy and Staley will take tickets at the entrances. Commissioners Lewis, Roberts, Staley will host the Northside exhibit and assist with seating guests as they arrive. Chairperson Palmer will host the speaker and guest. Commissioners Roberts and Roy will assist in clean up. Commissioner Kohen will host the Laws Award winner. Commissioner Staley will present the Laws Award to Mr. Maresca.

Commissioners voiced a preference that badges have individual names and the Commission name on the badges.

Commissioners agreed to have the May full Commission meeting on May 24th.

Commissioner Staley moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Kohen seconded. Meeting adjourned.